

# Bellingham

## People and Place

### Location

Bellingham is on Bellingham Bay in north Puget Sound, protected by Lummi Island, Portage Island, and the Lummi Peninsula. Situated in Whatcom County, the city encompasses 25.6 square miles of land and 6.1 square miles of surface water. The nearest major U.S. city is Seattle, a 90-mile drive south, while Vancouver, British Columbia, is a 54-mile drive north. Bellingham's geographic coordinates are lat 48°45'01"N, long 122°28'30"W.

### Demographic Profile

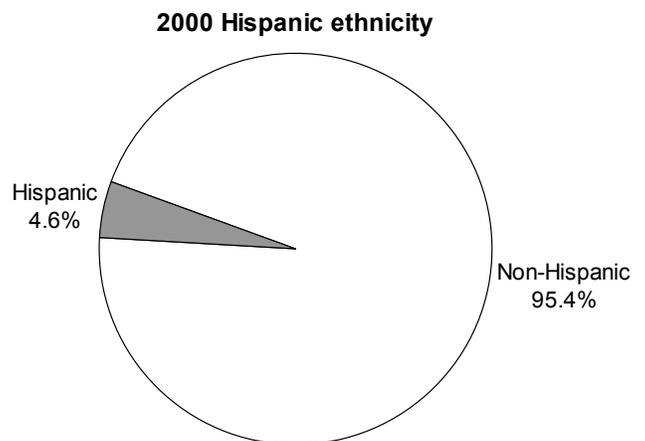
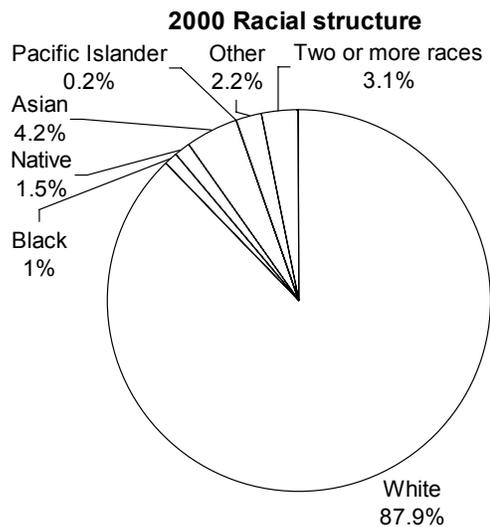
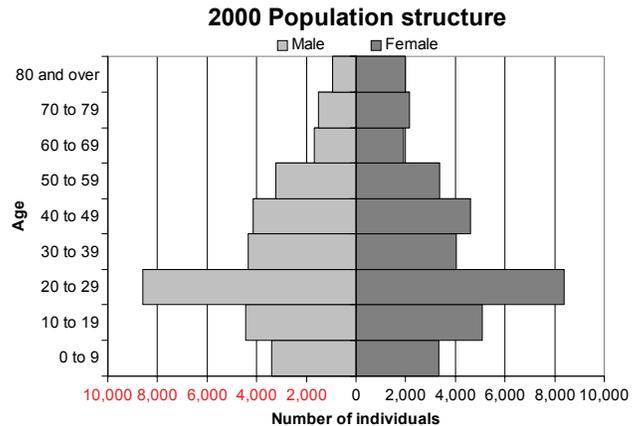
According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Bellingham's population was 67,171, an increase of 28.7% from 1990. The gender composition was 51.4% female and 48.6% male. The median age of 30.4 was lower than the national median of 35.3. Approximately 67.1% were between the ages of 18 and 60. Of the population 18 years of age and older, 90.0% had a high school education (including equivalency) or higher, 25.1% had earned a bachelor's degree or higher, and 8% had obtained a graduate or professional degree; the national averages were 79.7%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively.

The vast majority of Bellingham's racial structure recorded by the 2000 U.S. Census was white (87.9%), followed by Asian (4.2%), people who identified with two or more races (3.1%), people who identified with another race (2.2%), American Indian and Alaska Native (1.5%), black (1.0%), and Pacific Islander (0.2%). Ethnicity data indicate that 4.6% identified as Hispanic. In 2000 9.1% were foreign-born, with 38.1% from the Americas outside of the United States, 34.6% from Asian countries, and 25.7% from Europe.

In 2000 61.1% of Bellingham's population lived in family households.

### History

At the time of the first European settlement, thousands of native people lived in Whatcom County, utilizing forest and marine resources to make their living. Whatcom (meaning "noisy waters") County, derived its name from the sound of a waterfall at the mouth of Nooksack Creek. The tribal population around Bellingham was quite diverse when Europeans first arrived. In 1857 Edmund Fitzhugh, the first Indian agent of Washington Territory, reported a population of 510 Lummis, 450 Neuk-sacks, 150 Samish, and about 200 Sticks or Neukwers and Sia-man-nas.<sup>1</sup>

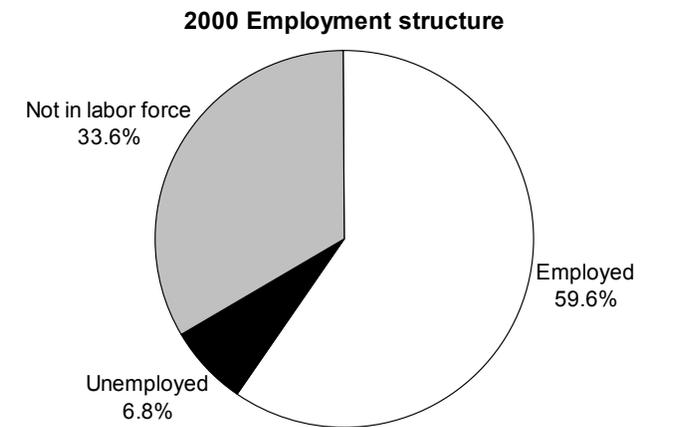


The Lummi Peninsula, located on the northwest side of Bellingham Bay, was once home to the Lummi people, while the Nooksacks lived upstream on Nooksack River. The Lummi were instrumental in the development of the bay's first European settlement, transporting the Europeans to Bellingham Bay by canoe, helping construct the first buildings, and providing food resources to the early settlers;<sup>2</sup> however conflict between the native peoples and settlers did exist. In 1898 European Americans drove several native reefnetters from the shores of the Frazier River in British Columbia where the Lummi caught and dried fish.<sup>3</sup> Judicial decisions made in favor of nontribal individuals further frustrated traditional Lummi fishing practices in the area.<sup>4</sup>

The English explorer Captain George Vancouver discovered Bellingham Bay in 1792. In 1853, a year after landing at the foot of Whatcom Falls, Russell Peabody built the first mill house and post office in what is now Bellingham. Four separate towns (Whatcom, Sehome, Bellingham, and Fairhaven) were settled, platted, and in most cases incorporated on Bellingham Bay before they finally came together to be known as the City of Bellingham in 1903.

The first town, Whatcom, boomed during the 1858 gold rush on the Fraser River in British Columbia as thousands awaited the completion of trails north into Canada and the gold fields. Whatcom residents built long wharves and dredged waterways to navigate mudflats and gain access to Bellingham Bay. The area that was Whatcom is now called Old Town. In the mid-1800s the second town, Sehome, was dominated by a company from San Francisco that built a coal mine, which facilitated the bay's economy. Later the company provided funds for a local railroad to explore additional coal resources. Today what was Sehome is Bellingham's downtown. The third community, Fairhaven, located just south of Bellingham, experienced periods of economic success and adversity. Today the name Fairhaven is used for the commercial and suburban area on Bellingham's south side. In the early 1860s the Union Coal Company developed on Bellingham Bay and the surrounding community was called Unionville. Over the next two decades other enterprises failed. In 1888 a Fairhaven developer purchased several empty lots on the bay and the area became part of Fairhaven on its incorporation in 1890. When the four towns decided to consolidate in 1903, the City of Bellingham had a population of 22,000 which grew to over 30,000 during the next decade.<sup>5</sup>

The Lummi Tribe continues to have a strong presence in the Bellingham area. The tribal offices are



located in Bellingham, as are centers of fitness, family services, employment and training, a police station, and an extensive Natural Resources Department. According to 2000 U.S. Census data, 4,193 tribal members lived on the Lummi reservation 7 miles northwest of Bellingham. The Nooksack tribal offices are in Deming 15 miles northeast.

## Infrastructure

### Current Economy

At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, 59.6% of Bellingham's potential labor force 16 years of age and older were employed, 6.8% were unemployed, and the unemployment rate was 10.3% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). In addition, 33.6% were not in the labor force, compared to the national average of 36.1%. The largest employment sectors were management, professional, and related occupations (33.3%), sales and office occupations (28.4%), and local, state, and federal governments (16.8%). Natural resource jobs including agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting employed 0.9%, but this percentage may be artificially low given that many fishermen are self-employed and are underrepresented in these data.

The top employers in the City of Bellingham are St. Joseph Hospital (1,775) and Western Washington University (1,570).<sup>6</sup> Bellingham's economy today relies less on mining, salmon canneries, and lumber than it did throughout the majority of the 1990s, and is more oriented toward tourism, retail, and the burgeoning academic population surrounding Western Washington University.<sup>7</sup> Lumber and fishing are still important economic activities in Bellingham, but the scale and method of production has evolved; mass production has slowed to meet specialized consumer demand and

mediate environmental concerns. During World War I Bellingham enjoyed a growth of shipbuilding and repair businesses and the industry has remained an important part of Bellingham's economic base. The shipbuilding industry is focused on metal fabrication, commercial and governmental shipbuilding and repair, and the construction of aluminum boats.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the per capita income in 1999 was \$19,483 and the median household income was \$32,530. In 1999 20.6% lived below the poverty level, compared to the national average of 12.4%. In 2000 there were 29,474 housing units in Bellingham, with 48.2% owner occupied and 51.8% renter occupied. The housing unit vacancy rate was 5%, with 9.1% vacant due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

## Governance

Incorporated in 1903, the City of Bellingham has a council-mayor form of government. The mayor is elected to four-year terms as the city's chief executive and administrative officer. Whatcom County levies an 8.3% sales tax and a 4% lodging tax. See the Governance subsection (page 43) in the Overview section for a more detailed discussion of taxes affecting fisherman and processors in Washington.

The nearest National Marine Fisheries Service Regional Office and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services District Office are in Seattle. Meetings of the Pacific Fishery Management and North Pacific Fishery Management councils are routinely held in the Seattle-Tacoma area. The nearest Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Regional Office is 70 miles south in Mill Creek. The U.S. Coast Guard Station (USCG) Bellingham's area of responsibility includes the San Juan Islands north to the Canada border and south to Admiralty Inlet. The USCG station works in close partnership with the Canadian Coast Guard and is occasionally involved in international search and rescue, and law enforcement operations. It was established in 1947 and maintains six vessels.

## Facilities

Bellingham is accessible by ground, sea, and air. Bellingham is located on the Interstate 5 (north-south) corridor. The major east-west highways are Interstate 90 in Seattle and Canadian National 1, approximately 50 miles north in Vancouver, British Columbia. Amtrak's Cascade Corridor Service, stopping in Bellingham, provides national and international rail passenger service. Bellingham International Airport is 3 miles northwest of the city and is served by United Express, West Isle Air, and Alaska Airlines. The Vancouver (British Columbia)

International Airport and Seattle-Tacoma International Airport are the nearest major facilities. Bellingham serves as a departing point for northbound travelers aboard the Alaska Marine Highway's ferries, operating year round to numerous ports throughout Alaska. Additional foot ferry services and charter vessels run from the Port of Bellingham's Cruise Terminal to Victoria, British Columbia, and the San Juan Islands in Washington.

The Bellingham School District has 13 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 10 high schools. There are 12 private schools in the Bellingham area and the Whatcom Home School Association provides assistance for families involved in home-school efforts. There are several universities and colleges in Bellingham, including Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, and the Northwest Indian College.

Puget Sound Energy administers electricity for city residents. The City of Bellingham supplies water, with Lake Whatcom, located east of Bellingham, the major source. The City of Bellingham's Wastewater Division within the Department of Public Works provides wastewater treatment. Cascade Natural Gas offers service to Bellingham and surrounding communities. The Bellingham Police and Fire departments administer public safety. St. Joseph's Hospital in Bellingham is the only major medical facility in Whatcom County and provides a full range of inpatient and outpatient services.

The City of Bellingham has numerous community services and organizations, including the Whatcom Museum of History and Art, the Bellingham Public Library Main Library and Fairhaven Branch, nearly 100 parks, and a civic stadium. The tourism industry in Bellingham is well developed with more than 100 hotels and motels in the area. The city is also home to Bellingham's Maritime Heritage Center, an urban park where you can fish for salmon and steelhead on Whatcom Creek and learn about the Whatcom Creek Hatchery operation. Sport fishermen return to the creek every year during salmon season 1 August–31 December.

The Port of Bellingham's facilities include a bulk and break-bulk shipping terminal (channel depth 32 feet; berthing space 1,360 feet), the Bellingham cruise terminal, and two harbors. The Port of Bellingham's Squalicum and Blaine harbors provide moorage for commercial and pleasure boats in the Bellingham area. At Squalicum Harbor, the port is developing a fishermen's wharf facility for direct marketing of spot prawns, salmon, and Dungeness crab. Blaine Harbor, located at the U.S.-Canada border, is homeport to more than 600 commercial and pleasure boats and has more than 700 feet of visitor moorage. Bellingham Cold

Storage is a full-service public refrigerated warehouse located on the waterfront providing services for a variety of food and seafood products in addition to freezing, boxing, ice sales, ship loading and unloading, and cargo pooling.

A number of aquaculture and hatchery organizations, facilities, and their associated supply businesses are located in Bellingham, including the Washington Farmed Salmon Commission, Lummi Shellfish Hatchery, Whatcom Falls Trout Hatchery, and Whatcom Creek Hatchery. The Lummi Shellfish Hatchery specializes in the culture of geoduck clams, Manila clams, and oysters. The Whatcom Creek Hatchery, established in 1978, works to enhance local salmon runs. The Whatcom Creek Hatchery at the Maritime Heritage Center in Bellingham is operated by students in the fisheries technology program at Bellingham Technical College; the program prepares students for employment in a variety of fishery-related occupations with an emphasis on aquaculture. The facility has the capacity to raise around 6 million fish annually and donates more than 2 million eggs to other enhancement groups.

There are several nonprofit organizations working in Bellingham that focus on fishery-related issues. The local marine resource committee (MRC), part of the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative, brings a scientific and grassroots approach to protecting and restoring marine resources works in the Bellingham area. Serving on the MRC are representatives from the scientific community, local and tribal governments, and economic, recreational, and conservation interests. Other community organizations include the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association and the Nooksack Recovery Team, working to restore fish habitat in the Nooksack watershed. The Puget Sound Action Team, based in Olympia, has several ongoing watershed, public involvement, and education projects in the Bellingham area.

## **Involvement in West Coast Fisheries**

### **Commercial Fishing**

Bellingham had at least nine seafood processors in 2000: Arrowac Fisheries Inc., Bornstein Seafoods Inc., Cascade Seafoods, Icicle Seafoods Inc., New West Fisheries Inc., San Juan Seafoods Inc., Trans-Ocean Products, Trident Seafoods, and Trilogy Pacific Inc. These processors had 676 employees in 2000. Many of those employed by processors in the area are Hispanic.<sup>8</sup> In 2000 an estimated 59,412,691 pounds of fish were processed and valued at \$98,844,938. In 2000 the top three processed products in the community in terms of

pounds and revenue earned were: pollock 39,519,145 lbs/\$44,844,078; salmon 6,520,820 lbs/\$14,533,181; and halibut 5,751,304 lbs/\$19,820,649. Bornstein Seafoods, historically a groundfish processing and distribution company, is expanding to process and distribute Oregon seafood products. In the 1990s the company invested in a processing plant in Astoria, Oregon, specializing in bait sardine processing, and purchased an Ocean Beauty plant in Newport, Oregon. New West also has invested in facilities to process sardines.<sup>9</sup> Seafood Producer's Cooperative, a large and successful fishermen's cooperative, is based in Bellingham; members produce, process, and market troll salmon and longline fish. Wildcatch Seafood, a business dedicated to improving the lives of independent fishermen in Alaska, markets wild salmon to co-ops, natural food stores, and other high-end retailers.

Landings data for Bellingham includes records from the nearby community of Marietta. Of the 1,268 unique vessels that delivered landings to Bellingham and Marietta in 2000, 735 were tribal commercial vessels, 375 were commercial vessels, 157 were for personal use, and 1 was for aquaculture. Landings were in the following West Coast fisheries (data shown represents landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels landing): coastal pelagic confidential/confidential/1; crab 1,300 t/\$6,000,290/368; groundfish 5,461 t/\$4,699,501/77; salmon 1,117 t/\$2,373,443/669; shellfish 276 t/\$1,447,756/234; shrimp 27 t/\$302,812/53; and other species 621 t/\$3,998,297/82.

Bellingham residents owned 224 vessels in 2000, including 97 vessels that participated in the federally managed groundfish fishery (10 vessels became part of the Groundfish Vessel Buyback Program in 2003). The number of vessels that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 7/11/6, crab 58/2/0, groundfish 23/0/NA, highly migratory species NA/0/NA, salmon 83/0/0, shellfish NA/0/NA, shrimp NA/0/0, and other species 30/0/0.<sup>10</sup>

Three Bellingham residents held three federally managed groundfish fishery permits in 2000. The number of Bellingham residents that held permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 16/14/63, crab 50/1/0, groundfish 8/0/0, highly migratory species NA/0/0, salmon 208/1/0, shellfish 0/0/NA, shrimp 3/0/0, and other species 22/0/1.<sup>11</sup>

Available data indicate that 551 state and federal permits were registered to Bellingham residents in 2000. The number of permits held by community members in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 17/14/141, crab 89/0/0, groundfish 21/0/0, highly migratory species NA/0/0, salmon 236/0/0, shellfish 0/0/NA, shrimp 3/0/0, and other species 26/0/1.<sup>12</sup>

The tribal commercial fishery plays a significant role in local fishing industry. The Lummi Natural Resource Department has offices in Bellingham encompassing several divisions, including Natural Resource Harvest Management, Shellfish Operations, and Water Resources. Shellfish Operations provides a sustainable shellfish program through the sale of oyster and clam products using the shellfish hatchery, Lummi Island Sea Pond, and tribal tidelands.

According to the Boldt Decision,<sup>13</sup> in addition to several reef-net locations (i.e., Orcas, San Juan, Lummi, and Fidalgo islands, and near Point Roberts and Sandy Point), the usual and accustomed fishing grounds of the Lummi Indians at treaty times included the marine areas of northern Puget Sound from the Fraser River in British Columbia south to the northern outskirts of Seattle (as they existed in 1974), and particularly Bellingham Bay. Freshwater fisheries included the river drainage systems, especially the Nooksack River, emptying into the bays from Boundary Bay south to Fidalgo Bay.

### Sportfishing

In 2000 there were at least one salmonid and one nonsalmonid charter fishing operators in Bellingham. In 2003 at least two salmonid charter fishing businesses operated in Bellingham. There were nine licensed agents selling fishing permits in Bellingham. In 2003 there were 20,090 sportfishing license transactions valued at \$339,527.

In Catch Record Card Area 7 (San Juan Islands) the 2000 sport catch, based on catch record cards, was 7,178 fish, including 4,495 Chinook salmon, 2,644 coho salmon, 21 chum salmon, and 18 sockeye salmon. Marine angler made 30,627 trips in the sport salmon fishery in 2000. Boat-based anglers caught 5,897 bottomfish in Area 7. The recreational harvest of clams (lbs) and oysters (#) for Area 7 in 2000 was estimated to be 115,273 and 0 respectively; harvest occurred over an estimated 19,752 user trips.

### Subsistence

Subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering activities are fundamental to the way of life of some coastal community members. Tribal and nontribal individuals participate in subsistence fishing. Today members of the Lummi Tribe and other nontribal subsistence fishermen obtain fishery resources from the waters surrounding Bellingham. Subsistence fishing is not discussed in great detail in this community profile due to the lack of available data.

## Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

### Commercial Fishing

In 2000 Bellingham residents owned 220 vessels that were involved in North Pacific fisheries. Community members landed fish in the following North Pacific fisheries (data shown represent landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels landing): crab confidential/confidential/3; Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish 7,312.7 t/\$2,970,760/6; other finfish 1.2 t/\$610/5; Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish 1,487.6 t/\$1,230,280/17; halibut 171.5 t/\$985,480/10; herring 1,878.6 t/\$614,360/38; salmon 8,386.3 t/\$7,416,500/136; shellfish 36.6 t/\$154,710/9; and scallops confidential/confidential/1.

In 2000 Bellingham residents held 357 state and federal registered permits, including 201 individuals who held state permits and 85 who held registered federal permits (note: it is possible for individuals to hold more than one permit at a time). Community members held 9 crab, 27 groundfish, and 1 scallop License Limitation Program permits in 2000. Residents held 2 crab, 33 BSAI groundfish, 18 halibut, 66 herring, 165 salmon, 1 scallop, and 16 shellfish Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission permits in 2000. Bellingham residents held 3,380,256 halibut and 1,678,178 sablefish individual fishing quota shares in 2000.

Bellingham residents held 367 crew member licenses for North Pacific fisheries in 2000.

### Sportfishing

Bellingham community members purchased 521 Alaska sportfishing licenses in 2000. That year six Bellingham sportfishing businesses participated in Alaskan fisheries.

## Notes

1. Northwest Waterfront. 2000. Bellingham, Washington. Online at <http://www.nwwf.com/profile/whabel.htm> [accessed 31 January 2007].
2. Whatcom Museum. 2004. History of Bellingham. Online at <http://www.whatcommuseum.org> [accessed 31 January 2007].
3. T. Schlosser. 1978. Washington's resistance to treaty Indian commercial fishing: The need for judicial apportionment. Online at <http://www.msaj.com/papers/commfish.htm> [accessed 31 January 2007].
4. See note 3.
5. See note 2.
6. Johnson Real Estate Team. No date. Top employers. Online at [http://www.johnsonrealestate.com/relo\\_topemployers.cfm](http://www.johnsonrealestate.com/relo_topemployers.cfm) [accessed 31 January 2007].
7. Bellingham Herald. 2002. Bellingham. Online at <http://cityguide.bellinghamherald.com/fe/communities/profile.asp?businessid=1042> [accessed 31 January 2007].

8. H. J. Brown. 2002. Processing is entry into fishing industry. The Bellingham Herald, Bellingham, WA, 3 March 2002, S4.

9. ODFW (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife). 2003. Oregon's commercial fishing industry: Review of years 2000 and 2001, preliminary estimates for 2002, outlook for 2003. Online at [http://www.dfw.state.or.us/odfwhtml/commercial/commercial\\_fishing\\_report.pdf](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/odfwhtml/commercial/commercial_fishing_report.pdf) [accessed 27 January 2007].

10. NA refers to data that were available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of a fishery in 2000.

11. See note 8.

12. See note 8.

13. Center for Columbia River History. No date. Boldt Decision. Online at <http://www.ccrh.org/comm/river/legal/boldt.htm> [accessed 31 January 2007].